

Tonto National Forest Assessment & Forest Plan Revision Overview

US Forest Service
Tonto National Forest





What is the **Forest Plan** and **Why Does it Matter?**

- A framework for integrated resource management, and guide for decision-making
- Informs management over the next 15 years
- Directly affects environmental health, economic vitality, and quality of life
- Site-specific decisions are not made in the Plan, but are shaped by it



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Caring for the land and serving people

Why revise **now**?

- Plans are required by law to be revised at least every 15 years
- The Tonto NF will be the last national forest in Arizona to use a 1980s-era plan
- Nationally, the USFS recently adopted an improved process and new direction for revising forest plans, known as the 2012 Planning Rule



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What is new about the **2012 Planning Rule**?

Features include:

- Enhanced commitment to collaboration and public engagement (across all planning phases; new audiences including youth)
- “All lands” perspective
- Best available science; sustainability and “ecosystem services”
- Forest Supervisor is the responsible official for approval of plan revision



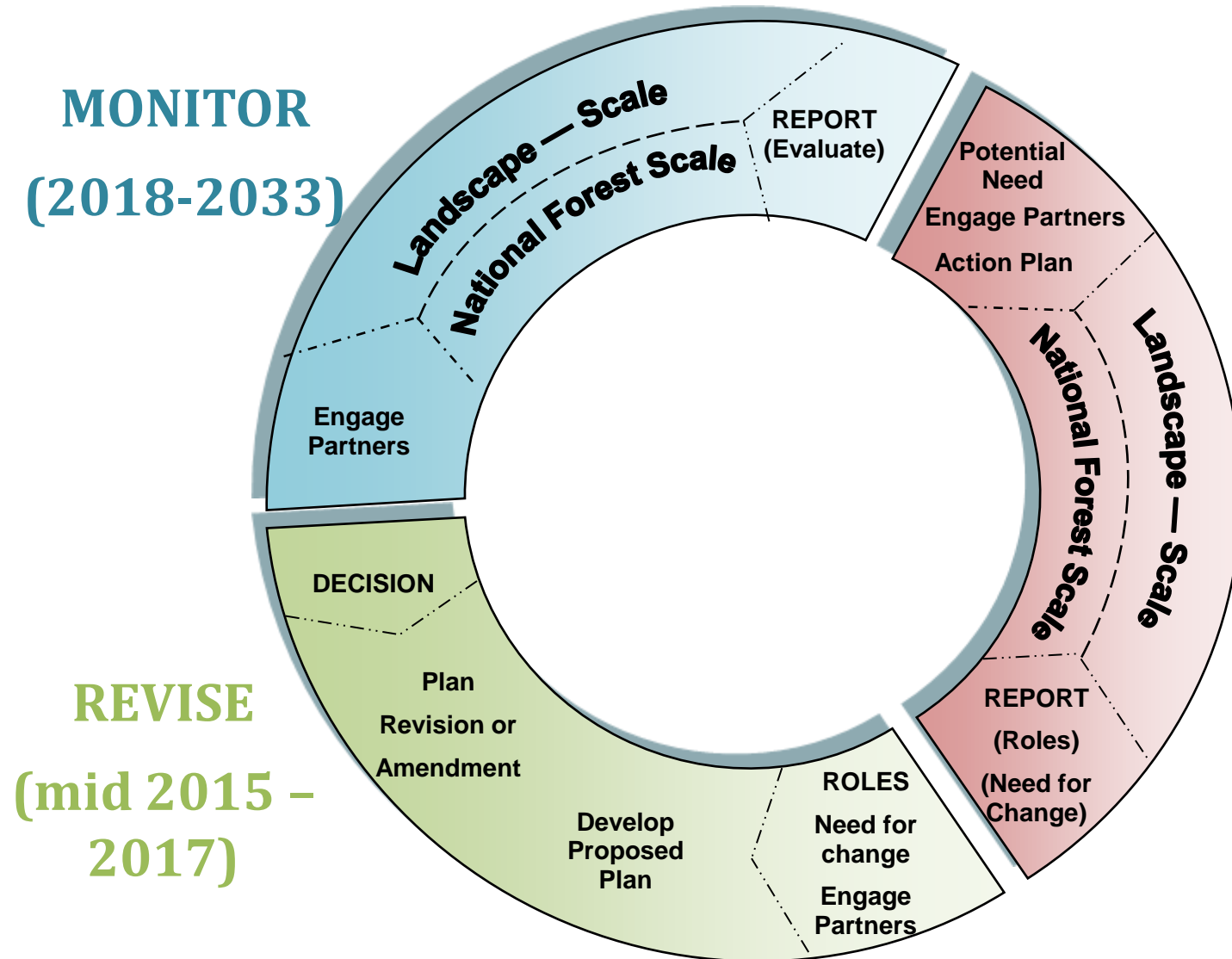
What are the **components of a forest plan**?

- **Desired conditions** describe a picture of the desired outcome of land management
- **Objectives** are measurable statements of progress toward a desired condition
- **Standards** are mandatory constraints on new projects and activities to move closer toward desired conditions
- **Guidelines** are constraints on new projects and activities that allow for departure from its terms, as long as intent of guideline is met

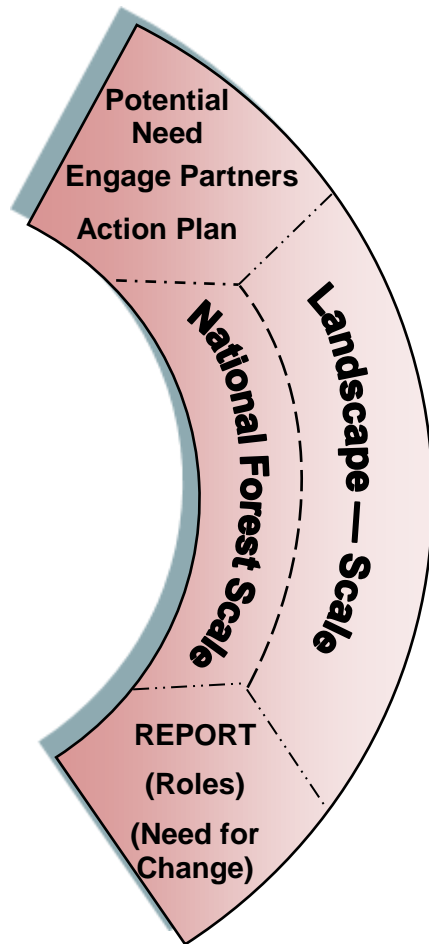


What are the **three phases** of the planning process?

MONITOR
(2018-2033)



What is the **purpose of an Assessment**?



- Reviews conditions, trends, stressors
 - On the Tonto NF
 - In context of broader landscape
- Rapid evaluation, collaborative
- Gather & analyze existing info
- 15 items: ecological, social, economic
- Help identify how the 1985 Plan needs to be revised (aka “Need for Change”)
- Forest Supervisor has discretion to determine the scope, scale, timing

What are **potential topics** for an Assessment?

Ecological Sustainability and Diversity

- Terrestrial ecosystems, aquatic ecosystems, and watersheds
- Air, soil, and water resources
- System drivers and stressors
- Baseline assessment of carbon stocks
- Threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate species, and potential species of conservation concern



Assessment of Ecological Sustainability

Steps:

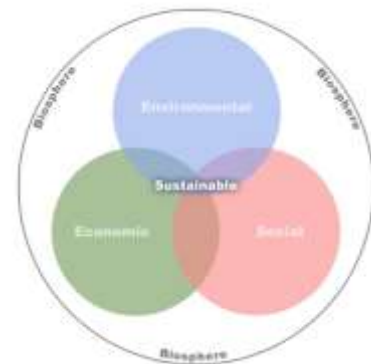
1. Identify **key characteristics** for analysis
2. Describe **current conditions**
3. Compare current to **reference conditions**
4. Project **future conditions** according to current management
5. **Evaluate risk** to characteristics and species & make conclusions



What are **potential topics** for an Assessment?

Social and Economic Sustainability

- Social, cultural, and economic conditions
- Benefits people obtain from Tonto (ecosystem services)
- Multiple uses and their economic contributions
- Recreation settings, opportunities, and access
- Energy and mineral resources
- Infrastructure, transportation and utility corridors
- Areas of Tribal importance
- Cultural and historic resources and uses
- Land ownership, use, and access patterns
- Wilderness Areas, Wild & Scenic Rivers, other designated areas



Assessment Process Outcomes

- Assessment Report
- Understanding of current conditions, departure, and trends
- Preliminary “need for change” for public input
- Assists with plan development



Plan Revision Process Timelines

- Assessment Report Available for Review: ***May 2015***
- Draft Forest Plan/EIS for Available Comments: ***June - Sept 2016***
- Objection Process: ***Sept 2017 – Feb 2018***
- Final Forest Plan/EIS: ***March 2018***

Collaboration and Public Participation opportunities will be made available throughout the process

